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Kathleen K. McIntosh

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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

THE ROLE OF MENTORING IN THE IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION OF  
COLLEGE STUDENT UNIONS/ACTIVITIES CAREERS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Kathleen K. McIntosh

October 11, 2011

Kent Rhodes, Ed.D. — Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Kathleen K. McIntosh

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

“A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could.” ~ *Unknown*

To the mentors who challenged and encouraged me to reach higher than I thought possible. It is because of their motivation and faith that I strive to inspire others. To my students, my dream is that you discover in yourself the talents and passion that will allow you to climb the highest mountains.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the love and support of many individuals. Many thanks to my dissertation chairs, Dr. Kent Rhodes and Dr. Doug Leigh. Your guidance, ongoing support, and insight into the creation of this document are very much appreciated. Also to my committee, Dr. Mark Allen and Dr. Kim Clark, your feedback, support, patience, and laughter kept me moving forward.

Special thanks to all of the participants in this study and my colleagues in the Association of College Unions International. Without your dedication and commitment to the student union-activities profession and the students for whom you serve, this project would not exist. Your dedication and service to students continue to amaze and inspire! Always remember to share your story with the next generation of union-activities professionals!

To Dr. Susan H. Payment and Dr. Cynthia Avery, who provided a level of expertise and honesty that is unmatched. Your ability to challenge, question, and explore have strengthened this project as well as my own understanding and development. For that, I will always be grateful.

This project led to the development of knowledge, but equally important, to the development of friends. To my Pepperdine cohort, your thoughts and experiences challenged me to explore a larger world. Not only were you classmates, but true friends and colleagues for years to come.

Thanks to my lunchers, Mandy, Marie, and Jason, who kept me laughing throughout this journey.

To my children, Emma and Andrew, thank you for your unending hugs, kisses, and smiles. May you always love learning and feed your adventurous spirit! To Tyler, my awesome husband, thank you for always supporting and encouraging me to keep pursuing my goals. I couldn't have done it without your love and never-ending support!

And to my parents, Rick and Lenora Kneeshaw, thank you for teaching me that learning is a lifelong experience and to embrace fully every opportunity that comes my way. I am forever grateful for your inspiration, constant support and encouragement, humor, and love.

## VITA

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1998 Master of Arts Leadership Studies—University of San Diego

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McIntosh, K. (2005). *Developing Active Training Programs*. Presented at the Association of College Unions International Region 15, Sacramento, CA.

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2009–2010 Project Manager, Student Life Initiatives

2008–2009 Assistant Director, Leadership Programs, Student Leadership and Involvement Center

1999–2005 Assistant Director, Student Computing

1998–1999 Leadership Program/Marketing Coordinator, Student Affairs

1996–1998 Graduate Assistant for Programming, Associated Students Santa Clara University

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Association of College Unions International (ACUI)

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## ABSTRACT

Commonly referred to as the living room of campuses, student union facilities serve as an environment for the social, cognitive, cultural, and intellectual education of students that occurs outside the classroom. This study aims to provide an understanding and knowledge of the student union-activities profession, its dedicated professionals, and the impact of their work on college students.

This grounded theory and phenomenological study sought to deduce how student union-activities professionals identified and selected their careers based on available alternatives. The research questions explored in this study were: (a) What are student union and activities administrators' recollections of their lived experiences as they identified and selected their career among available alternatives?; (b) To what extent, if at all, does mentoring and professional development serve a role in student union and activities administrators' career paths? The study analyzed the role that mentors played in the career identification, selection, and success of their protégés, as well as the benefits to the mentor. Also highlighted were the role of professional networks and the impact of professional standards in the student union-activities profession.

## Chapter 1: The Problem

The concept of student unions and, in turn, student union professionals, dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the rise of debating societies and social fraternities on college and university campuses (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968). Colleges and universities began to hire administrators to oversee the out-of-class activities and experiences of students and help develop their professional competencies and engagement in the world around them. Organized support for professionals in student unions and activities came about in 1914 with the creation of the Association of College Unions International (ACUI, 2006). ACUI is a professional, knowledge-based organization designed to support student union and activities professionals in their roles of creating environments for student learning and development. This new professional role became more formalized in 1937 by the American Council on Education in its publication *Student Personnel Point of View*. The *Student Personnel Point of View* identified two major components of student personnel work: (a) Student development is a cooperative effort between faculty and administrators; and (b) Student personnel work focus on the development of the “individual student’s total characteristics and experiences rather than with separate and distinct aspects of his personality or performance” (p. 5).

Student union facilities, often referred to as the “living room” (ACUI, 2006, p. 1) of campus serve as an environment for the social, cognitive, cultural, and intellectual education of students that occurs outside the classroom. They provide a place for the interaction among faculty members, students, and staff members through informal and structured activities, including clubs and organizations, educational programs, and employment opportunities. Research shows that increased interactions between faculty



members and students outside of the classroom directly relates to the students' success during college and postgraduation (A. W. Astin, 1993). Yet, the learning environment provided in the student union setting does not come into being without being strategically created and encouraged by student union and activities professionals.

The American Council on Education (1937) report also highlighted the importance of and collaboration among professional associations dedicated to providing services in the field of student development. In 1955, ACUI developed the Role of the College Union, which defined the role of the college union as a place that “offers first-hand experience in citizenship and educates students in leadership, social responsibility, and values” (ACUI, 2006, p. 1), thus emphasizing the important role of the student union on campus. The profession was also strengthened in 1972 and 1975 by Tomorrow's Higher Education published by the American College Personnel Association. Tomorrow's Higher Education initiative aimed to humanize the academic dimensions of collegiate life by student services educators and to demonstrate that student development requires a total campus effort. It also focused on the need of student services professionals to be more proactive in their efforts, rather than reactive, in order to help individuals and groups shape change that unites the community.

The role of student union and activities professionals has continued to evolve and define itself in higher education. Despite its growth, the college student union-activities profession is not commonly identified or well understood, even by many in higher education. According to Janosik, Carpenter, and Creamer (2006), the acceptance of the student personnel field relies on the development of “an intentional plan for continuing professional education” (p. 233) and the establishment of an overarching association and

curriculum to ensure quality professionals. Miller and Sandeen (2003) stated, “It would behoove the profession to agree upon, establish, and follow a set of standards for professional development programs that would include expectations for both the process and the content of professional development” (p. 5). While the ACUI, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and the American College Personnel Association have worked to develop certification programs and professional standards, no such programs have been currently accepted and implemented across the profession.

### **Problem Statement**

The National Center for Education Studies estimates that by 2018, total enrollment at degree granting institutions will increase to 20.6 million students (Brainard, 2009). It is expected that the increase will be composed of 38% Hispanic students, 26% African American students, and only 4% white students. Enrollment among female students is expected to grow by 16% and 9% among male students. Because of those demographic changes, an increased need exists for colleges and universities to provide environments for holistic, cocurricular learning, which requires an increase in dedicated and competent student union-activities professionals.

At the same time, rarely does one find an incoming college or university freshman who says he or she wants to grow to become a student union-activities professional. Therefore, current student union-activities professionals must be assertive and strategic in encouraging new college graduates to join the ranks. Important research has been done on the student union as an environment for learning and holistic development (ACUI, 2006; A. W. Astin, 2001; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005); however, little

research has been done on the choice of student union-activities work as a career and the role of mentoring-role modeling in that selection.

This study identifies the processes of identifying and selecting the student union-activities profession within the ACUI, and the role that mentoring plays in the recruitment and long-term success of new professionals.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to identify student union and activities administrators' recollections of their lived experiences as they identified and selected their career among available alternatives. In addition, this study describes the role of mentoring and professional development in these professionals' career paths.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were used to guide this study:

1. What were student union and activities administrators' recollections of their lived experiences as they identified and selected their career among available alternatives?
2. To what extent, if at all, did mentoring and professional development serve a role in student union and activities administrators' career paths?

### **Operational Definitions**

The following definitions were used to guide this research:

*Career*: Zunker (1998) states that career refers to the "activities and positions involved in vocations, occupations, and jobs as well as to related activities associated with an individual's lifetime of work" ( p. 7). Expanding throughout a number of years, a career is an individual's progression through a specific work environment, occupation, or

vocation. Sears (1982) defines career development as a lifelong process that includes psychological, sociological, educational, economic, physical factors, and chance interactions.

*Career advancement:* This is the progress and growth of an individual through his or her chosen career, including personal development and increased professional responsibilities. Career advancement is often based on the development of technical competence, interpersonal and political skills, and a sense of competence in his or her career (Kram, 1983). Many professions have a specific path of training for advancement in their profession, including mentored apprenticeships and formal coursework (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998).

*Career selection:* The selection by an individual of a specific course or progress through a profession. Winston and Creamer (1998) state that career selection is strongly influenced by “self-perceived talents and abilities based on success in various work settings, self-perceived motives and needs, and self-perceived attitudes and values” ( p. 34). Career selection also refers to an individual’s long-term commitment to his or her field of employment, based on years of service and advancement in the field. Super (1957) theorized that career selection was not a once-in-a-lifetime decision, but one of ongoing development and transition. Scholssber, Waters, and Goodman (1995) stated that such advancement can be described as “any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationship, routines, assumptions, and roles” ( p. 24).

*Identifying a career:* This is the process by which an individual becomes aware of a specific profession or job. The process of identification is both cognitive and affective (Zunker, 1998). The research focused on the methods by which individuals identified

career options, and factors that influenced their choice of a specific career. Examples of career influences may include, but are not limited to, mentors, undergraduate experiences (volunteer and paid), and graduate-level academic programs. This was measured through each individual's ability to identify and recollect specific influences in their personal career path.

*Lived experience:* This is defined as an individual perceptions of his or her experiences in the world (Morse & Richards, 2002). The recollections of lived experiences by student union-activities professionals provided insight into how they identified the student union-activities profession as a career option and the impact of mentoring in their career choice and success. Their recollection of lived experiences was gathered through 90-minute, semistructured, qualitative interviews conducted by the researcher.

*Mentoring:* This is the process by which an experienced person contributes to the development of a less experienced person through trust, coaching, role modeling, counseling, training, and guiding in ways that, Gaskin, Lumpkin, and Tenant, (2003) stated, "enhance their performance and guide them into reflective practice" ( p. 51). An underlying assumption exists that mentoring serves to enhance the protégé's personal and career development. For the purposes of this study, mentoring was considered an ongoing relationship between the mentor and protégé. The occurrence of a mentoring relationship was self-identified by the study participants.

*Staff-professional development:* This is the process of continuing education by which professionals gain new skills and remain at the forefront of their field. Schwartz and Bryan (1998) stated that staff development is "a planned experience designed to

change behavior and result in professional and/or personal growth and improved organizational effectiveness” ( p. 55). Staff-professional development often occurs outside of daily duties and responsibilities (Winston & Creamer, 1998). Staff-professional development was measured by the amount of ongoing training and development in which the individual has actively participated. Examples of staff-professional development include participation in professional associations and conferences, educational workshops and training programs, research projects, or any program in which, Schwartz and Bryan (1998) state, a person “acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights” ( p. 47).

### **Key Terms**

The following key terms were used to focus this research:

*College student development:* This is positive growth processes, often through higher education, through which a student becomes increasingly able to deal with complex experiences (Hamrick, Evans, & Schuh, 2002). Chickering (1969) described these processes as a systematic framework of vectors through which college students progress. The vectors include achieving competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. A. W. Astin (1977, 1993) posits that a student’s development is enhanced by the level of involvement and participation that the student has on campus. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) stated, “Development or changes is not merely the consequence of college’s impact on a student, but rather a function of the quality of student effort or involvement with the resources provided by the institution” (p. 54).

*Phenomenology*: This involves identifying the essence of an experience through descriptive, reflective, interpretive, and engaging modes of inquiry (van Manen, 1990).

*Profession*: This is a group of persons with a common purpose and standards engaged in an occupation or vocation.

*Student activities administrators*: These are professional staff responsible for the development and implementation of programs and services within the student union that provide opportunities for holistic student development. Positions/titles may include, but are not limited to, Student Activities directors, Associate and Assistant Directors and student government advisors.

*Student union*: This encompasses facilities that serve as the heart of college and university campuses and provide services and programs to enhance and develop students and campus life (ACUI, 2006). Campus departments normally housed in student union facilities include, but are not limited to, food services, student government-organizations, recreation facilities, administration offices, conference services, meeting spaces, and informal lounges.

*Student union administrators*: These are professional staff charged with creating an environment for holistic development by overseeing the physical and operational needs of student union facilities. Positions-titles may include, but are not limited to, student union directors, associate and assistant directors, scheduling coordinators, and facilities-operations managers.

### **Importance of the Study**

Understanding the role of student employment-involvement and mentoring in the identification and selection of the student union-activities profession is important for

several reasons. First, educating the public as to the student union-activities profession and the services it provides will highlight the cocurricular, holistic development that occurs outside of the classroom and the need for trained and dedicated professionals. An increased understanding of the strategic role of student unions and activities on college and university campuses helps to legitimize the profession and recognize the contribution it plays in student development.

Second, Richmond and Sherman (1991) refers to the student affairs profession as a “hidden profession” (p. 8) because so few individuals recognize it as a career choice and there is no specific undergraduate major that directly leads to the field of student affairs. Therefore, developing an understanding of how and when students first become aware of the student union-activities profession allows for targeted programs and interactions with students that encourage them to consider entering the profession.

Third, the longevity of the profession relies on continually attracting new talented, well-rounded young professionals who are committed to student development and seek to influence positively the next generation of college students. Last, an increased understanding of the role mentoring plays in career choice and retention allows for the development of strategic mentoring programs that attract future professionals.

### **Assumptions**

The basic assumptions of this study were:

1. The participants were truthful and up front regarding their recollections of their lived experiences.
2. The participants have no vested interest in the results of this research and will, therefore, not willingly influence the findings of this research.



## **Limitations**

The following limitations of this study included:

- The ability of student union-activities professionals to recall specific factors that influenced their career choice.
- The ability to obtain honest and accurate information based on memories of past life experiences from study participants. Follow-up prompts and questions were used to clarify responses to ensure accuracy.
- The influence or bias of the interviewer based on personal experiences in the field of student union-activities and personal mentoring relationships.

Phenomenological bracketing was used to focus on how the experiences impacted the researcher, not on the existence of the experiences. This allowed the researcher to focus on the basic rules and processes by which we understand the world.

- The limited sampling of student union-activities professionals who are active members of the ACUI potentially resulted in findings that are not generalizable to a larger population.

## **Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on the background, purpose, research questions, assumptions, and limitations of the study. The second chapter looks at research related to the development of student union-activities administration as a profession and the role that mentoring has on a person's choice to enter the field. Chapter 3 focuses on the methods used in the study, including the study's design and rationale, sampling methods, human subjects considerations, instrument

development, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques. The fourth chapter includes study results as answers to its research questions. Finally, Chapter 5 lays out conclusions and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Student Affairs Profession**

The legitimacy of the student affairs profession has long been a topic of discussion (Boland, Stamatakos, and Rogers, 1994). The student affairs profession has struggled to define itself because of the lack of one overarching association. Miller and Sandeen (2003) stated, “Until that day comes it can be assumed that the student affairs profession will continue to be viewed as an immature profession” (p. 7). Members of the student affairs profession currently participate in a range of associations, including the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, the American College Personnel Association, and the ACUI. Professional associations provide opportunities for networking with other professionals, facilitating job searches, and connecting professionals at different institutions (Harned and Murphy, 1998). The associations all offer professional development opportunities, including conferences and workshops, but according to Dean, Woodard, and Cooper (2007), they lack a method for documenting skills, knowledge, and abilities gained through participation.

Miller and Sandeen (2003) recommend the development of professional standards and ongoing development programs to ensure consistency and professionalism among student affairs professionals. The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and American College Personnel Association (1996) promote “Principles of Good Practice” (p. 2) in student affairs, including engaging students in active learning that “bring their life experiences into the learning process, reflect on their own and other’s perspectives and apply new understandings of their own lives” (p. 2). They added,

“The interweaving of students’ academic, interpersonal, and developmental experiences is a critical institutional role for student affairs” (p. 2).

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2006) were developed in the late 1980’s as a collaboration between 35 various higher education associations in a attempt to create standards for student affairs practice and educational development. According to the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, it is expected that student affairs professionals “stay professionally current by reading literature, building skills, attending conferences, enhancing technological literacy, and engaging in other professional development activities” (p. 19). The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education states:

All programs of study must include 1) foundational studies, 2) professional studies, and 3) supervised practice. Foundational studies must include the study of the historical and philosophical foundations of higher education and student affairs. Professional studies must include (a) student development theory, (b) student characteristics and effects of college on students, (c) individual and group interventions, (d) organization and administration of student affairs, and (e) assessment, evaluation, and research. Supervised practice must include practica and/or internships consisting of supervised work involving at least two distinct experiences. Demonstration of minimum knowledge in each area is required of all graduate programs. ( p. 350)

More than 125 master’s and doctoral programs in the United States grant degrees in student affairs administration-college student development (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Despite this need for such programs, Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, and Molina (2009)

argue that because of the differences in institutions, complexity of functions, and work environments, there is no one way to prepare new professionals. Instead, they argue that all student affairs preparation programs should base their study on the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education standards and competencies. The debate still exists whether graduate students are adequately prepared for careers in student affairs as a result of the rapidly changing higher education environment (Herdlein, 2004).

### **Career Choice**

H. S. Astin (1984) theorized that individuals pursue careers that build off of their early experiences, opportunities, perceived opportunities, and that satisfy their basic needs. According to Gordon and Steele (2003), 20%–50% of students are undecided about their major during their freshman year and 50%–70% will change their career plans at least once during their academic tenure. Socialization directly influences one's expectations, as well as long-term work behavior and can be modified through exposure to new experiences and interactions (H. S. Astin, 1984; S. C. Brown, 2004). Larkin, LaPort, and Pines (2007) wrote:

College jobs, in which students use skills taught in the classroom, enhance both the overall education and career development, reinforcing the course work and enabling students to determine from their firsthand experiences whether they want to pursue a long-term career in their current area of employment. (p. 86)

Lindholm (2004) found that finding a fit between personal ambition and work environment were essential to successful career choice. Similarly, Super's (1957) self-concept theory stated that people choose careers that allow them to focus on their self-conceptualized interests and abilities. Lepre (2007) stated that based on Astin's theory

that students who are more involved on campus and in the world around them get more out of their college experience,

...then it follows that if a student becomes more involved in thinking about his or her future career, then the student has a better chance of success both in selecting a career he or she will find satisfying and in college in general. (p. 81)

Schein (1990) identified eight career anchors that influence career selection, including technical and functional competence, general managerial competence, security and stability, creativity, sense of service-dedication to a cause, autonomy, lifestyle, and pure challenge. According to R. D. Brown (1987), "People enter student affairs careers by accident or by quirk, rather than by design" (p. 5). A 1992 qualitative study of master's degree students identified four factors that influenced their decisions to enter the field of student affairs. Factors included encouragement by those in the field; critical incidents, including undergraduate student employment within the student affairs division; shared values; and a desire to improve campus life (Hunter, 1992). The attractiveness of the college environment and working with students have also been cited as being important factors (Forney, 1994). A Lindholm (2004) study of faculty, noted that a "sense of comfort" (p. 612) was identified as influencing graduates' decisions to enter academia rather than other professional contexts. More than two thirds noted that such comfort stemmed from their undergraduate collegiate experience. Richmond and Sherman (1991) also found that undergraduate employment was critical in the decision to pursue a career in student affairs. Williams, McEwen, and Engstrom (1990) indicated that having a mentor in the field of student affairs strongly influenced a person's decision to enter the student affairs profession.

Higher education research consistently promotes the benefits of student-faculty contact (A. W. Astin, 1977, 1993; Lomport, 1993). A. W. Astin (1993) found that the more contact between students and faculty, the greater the benefits in student development and satisfaction. Despite significant research on the impact of faculty-student interactions (Chickering, 1969; Terenzini, Theophilides, & Lorang, 1984), less research exists on the impact of student affairs professionals-student interactions.

Hunter (1992), Richmond, and Sherman (1991), and Williams et al. (1990) noted the importance of interactions with student affairs professionals on career choice. Blimling (2002) found that most students became aware of the student affairs profession through direct interactions with staff and administrators during their undergraduate cocurricular experiences (student government, fraternity-sorority life, resident assistants, student union board leader, etc.).

In Taub and McEwen's (2006) study, the authors found that 46% of students did not become aware of the student affairs profession until their junior or senior year, and 27.7% became aware only after graduation. Of those junior and senior students, 88% learned about the field of student affairs from talking with student affairs professionals and 80.3% responded that they were influenced by a specific person or persons.

Ting and Watt (1999) found that women are encouraged more by professionals in the field to enter the student affairs profession during their undergraduate experience. They acknowledged their desire to help students develop and were intrigued by the variety of student affairs work. Approximately two thirds of students in student affairs master's programs are women (Taub & McEwen, 2006). Despite these numbers, women

continue to encounter a glass ceiling when trying to obtain director or executive director positions in the student union environment (Payment, 2003).

### **Definition of Mentoring**

The idea of mentoring has been identified for centuries as method for maintaining culture, sharing knowledge, supporting talent, and securing future leadership (Darwin, 2000). Mentoring has been traced as far back as Homer's *The Odyssey*, in which a friend provided guidance to Odysseus' son in citizenship (Johnson & Nelson, 1999). Mentors have been described as guides, coaches, sponsors, advisors, trainers, teachers, and role models (Gonzales, 2006; Lyons, 2004) who participate in encouraging, sharing, active listening, providing feedback, and guidance to enhance performance of the protégé (Gaskin et al., 2003). The relationship between mentor and protégé often focuses on the professional and career development and, as Johnson and Nelson (1999) stated, has sometimes been characterized as "a strong and sometimes intense personal relationship" (p. 192). Hardy (1994) stated that mentor-protégé relationships "are viewed as forming slowly over time, being complex and emotionally intense, and being of great value to the mentor and [protégé]" (p. 200), often in the context of a long-term, emotionally bonded relationship (Johnson, 2003). Mentoring can occur in both formal and informal relationships. Informal mentoring relationships have been found to have more consistent positive outcomes, especially for women and minorities (Gonzales, 2006).

### **Types of Mentoring**

Informal mentoring relationships are often spontaneous and occur without formal recognition by the organization (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992). Phillips-Jones (1983) found that the majority of mentoring relationships are informal and stretch beyond career-



related issues and focus more on personal interests, needs, and values. Informal mentoring relationship often last 3 to 6 years (Kram, 1985b), whereas formal mentoring often occurs throughout a 6- to 12-month period (Zey, 1985). Erikson (1963), Kram (1985b), Kuh and Hu (2001), and Ragins and Cotton (1999) postulated that informal mentoring relationships develop through mutual identification, in which the protégé selects someone whom they admire and the mentor selects an individual who reminds he or she of him or her and is worthy of extra attention (Chao et al., 1992). While informal mentors display greater commitment to the mentoring relationship, formal mentors may be less motivated to foster a deep relationship with the protégé (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Formal mentors also exhibit less effective communication and coaching skills (Kram, 1985a). Ragins and Cotton (1999) found that protégés in informal mentoring relationships reported greater satisfaction with their mentors than individuals participating in formal mentoring relationships.

Formal mentoring programs, which tend to cover a much shorter duration than informal mentoring programs, are found in one third of the major companies in the United States (Bragg, 1989). Despite this number, no studies were identified that found formal mentoring to be more effective than informal mentoring (Chao, 2009). Formal mentoring programs are less likely to provide direct career support, instead focusing more on psychosocial support of the protégé (Chao et al., 1992). No published empirical research has examined the long-term benefits of formal mentoring; therefore, further research is needed to determine if the benefits become apparent in later years (Chao et al., 1992; Johnson, 2002).

## **The Role of Mentoring**

**Benefits of mentoring.** The role and impact of mentoring has been studied in a variety of contexts, including business (Jacobi, 1991), psychology (Clark, Harden, & Johnson, 2000), and education (Kuh & Hu, 2001). Mentoring is viewed as a developmental process based on mutual respect and reciprocal benefits. Benefits to protégés may include greater career mobility, higher overall salaries, greater personal and career satisfaction, decreased stress, higher self-esteem, reduced work-life conflicts, and increased power within the organization. Wright and Wright (1987) found that mentoring relationships benefited the organization through decreased turnover, greater organizational commitment, and higher rates of employee satisfaction. Crisp and Cruz (2009) stated, “It is imperative that student affairs administrators and faculty be able to draw upon theoretically sound research that informs the practice of mentoring” (p. 180).

Consistently, mentored individuals report greater career satisfaction (Fagenson, 1989), career mobility (Scandura, 1992), and career commitment (Colarelli and Bishop, 1990) than do unmentored individuals. Positive career and job attitudes have been found to be a direct result of effective mentoring (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Kram (1985b) identified aspects of mentoring relationships that directly related to career functions, including nominating protégés for career promotions, increasing visibility and exposure to expanded opportunities, providing feedback, idea sharing, and suggesting career strategies. Also noted was the significant amount of time that mentors spent coaching protégés on career aspirations and pathways (Kram, 1983), including long-range goals and developing a sense of direction. A direct connection between mentorship satisfaction and organizational commitment and career satisfaction has been identified (Fagenson,

1989; Ragins, Cotton, and Miller, 2000; Scandura, 1992). Mentored individuals also report higher levels of overall compensation (Dreher & Ash, 1990). Noe (1988) found that mentoring relationships were more effective when the participants were located in the same geographic area.

### **Undergraduate Versus Graduate Mentoring**

Anderson and Shore (2008) stated that undergraduate mentoring focuses more on the questions of “What do I want to be when I grow up?” (p. 5) as opposed to graduate and professional mentoring, which focuses on “How can I be successful in my chosen career” (p. 5). The mentor’s influence on an undergraduate student can extend beyond vocational choices and into cognitive, personal, and emotional development (Anderson & Shore, 2008; Chickering, 1969). A. W. Astin (1977) found that the college years are a critical period in the personal, social, and professional growth of students. Dagley and Paisley (2004) stated, “One of the tasks of the student affairs professional is to help students develop a greater sense of their own story, including the chapters of the past, present and projected future” (p. 88).

Graduate mentoring focuses more on practical issues of career development, involvement in professional organizations, and potential career moves (Ting & Watt, 1999). In successful mentoring relationships, it is common for mentors to continue to provide support to protégés after the student or young professional has progressed in his or her chosen career (Johnson, 2002). It is in these early professional years that protégés seek guidance about their competence, effectiveness, and their ability to achieve future goals (Kram, 1983). Hodge (2004) found that mentoring was a cost-effective way to prepare the next generation of student affairs professionals. Kelly (1982) concluded that

institutions should become more proactive in promoting mentoring relationships and educating students on the benefits of mentoring.

Professional networks play an important role in career development (Kemper, 1968; Kram, 1985b). Schwartz and Bryan (1998) stated that mentors help to connect protégés with professional organizations by “ensuring a basic understanding of the language, history, traditions, symbols and artifacts of a profession” ( p. 4). Mentors help connect protégés to the profession by introducing them to colleagues in the field, encouraging their participation in association meetings, and emphasizing the benefits of long-term participation in professional associations, thus providing a benefit to all involved (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Wright & Wright, 1987).

Currently the National Association of Campus Activities offers a formal mentoring program to underrepresented ethnicities so that those students become familiar with the association and the student activities field. The ACUI had discussed the creation of a formal mentoring program, but has not currently implemented such a program (S. H. Payment, personal communication, April 15, 2011). A formal program with the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators was not found.

### **Risks of Mentoring**

Risks involved in the personal and professional nature of some mentoring relationships have been identified by Johnson and Nelson (1999). Risks may include balancing an emotionally intimate relationship focused on self-disclosure and honesty between mentor and protégé in a work environment (Kalbfleisch & Davies, 1993). Mentors with higher self-esteem and less risk of intimacy found participation in mentoring relationships to be more beneficial and were more likely to participate. Kram

(1980) found that mentoring relationship can become destructive to one or both individuals if a sense of competition develops that inhibits participants from advancing in their own careers.

### **Benefits to Mentors**

The benefits of mentoring relationships are not limited to the protégés. Mentors identified both extrinsic (greater productivity, increased professional visibility, and potential monetary compensation) and intrinsic (personal satisfaction, validation, and a sense of confidence) rewards (Newby & Hiede, 1992; Wright & Wright, 1987). Johnson (2002) stated, “Mentorships are reciprocal and mutual by design, and the ultimate goal of the relationship is development of a strong professional identity and clear professional competence on the part of the protégé” ( p. 88). Bova and Phillips (1981) noted that people often choose to mentor others as a result of their positive experiences as protégés and their desire to provide the same experience for others. In addition, mentors enjoy the respect and recognition from protégés and the relationship often benefits the mentor’s career development (Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). Individuals who were mentored are more likely to become mentors (Hunt & Michael, 1983), thus creating a culture of mentoring within the organization (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997).

Because of the need for midcareer professionals to gain new skills in the workplace, mentoring relationships may turn away from chronological age to career age (Darwin, 2000). Younger professionals may begin to provide more mentoring to their superiors when it comes to technological advances in the workplace.

Because of the lack of formal, theoretically grounded mentoring programs in the previously identified student affairs professional organizations, there is a reliance on

informal mentoring relationships. Student affairs professionals need to determine how undergraduate students identify potential mentoring relationship (Crisp & Cruz, 2009).

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Design and Rationale**

Qualitative research views social phenomena holistically as it takes place, as Creswell (2003) stated, in “the natural setting” ( p. 181). According to Creswell, characteristics of qualitative research include taking place in the natural setting, multiple methods of data collection, allowing the data to emerge naturally, openness to the interpretation of the researcher, and it is a values-based inductive and deductive process. A fundamentally interpretive process, qualitative research relies on the active participation of both the researcher and the study participants. Based on the work of philosopher Edmund Husserl (as cited in Morse & Richards, 2002), phenomenological research assumes that “lived experiences” (p. 44) are the foundation of research and that they provide meaningful insights into the world around them.

Taking a qualitative, phenomenological approach, the study focused on the lived experiences of participants in order to identify patterns and common meanings (Creswell, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). People are considered to be tied to their worlds—embodied—and are understandable only in their contexts. Existence in this sense is meaningful (being in the world), and the focus is on the lived experience. Human behavior occurs in the context of relationships to things, people, events, and situations (Morse & Richards, 2002).

Phenomenological research is a multistep process that includes gathering verbal data, reading and analyzing the data, breaking the data into parts, organizing data into categories, and summarizing and synthesizing data (Giorgi, 1997). Phenomenological research begins with the researcher’s own lived experiences as a starting point (van

Manen, 1990) and is further developed through an investigation of literature, personal interviews, and anecdotes. Starks and Trinidad (2007) stated that a phenomenological analysis of the data seeks to “capture the meanings and common features, or essences, of experiences or events” ( p. 1374).

The student union-activities profession concerns, at its most basic level, relationships and holistic development. Morse and Richards (2002) stated, “Human behavior occurs in the context of relationship to things, people, events, and situations” (p. 45). This provides a natural connection to qualitative methodologies that focus on human behavior and identifying meaning from relationships and interactions. A phenomenological approach allowed for participants to identify and share the meaning of their personal experiences and relationships. Limited research currently exists that explores the connection between mentoring and career identification and selection. This research was designed to add to the body of understanding and knowledge (Creswell, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). This study aimed to examine the experiences of career identification and the role of mentoring in career selection and success in the field of student union-activities administration.

### **Sampling and Sample**

Purposeful sampling methods, in which, as Creswell (2003) stated, the researcher “purposefully selects participants that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (p. 185) were employed to identify eight to 10 student union-student activities professionals currently in the field of student unions-activities. Boyd (2001) suggest that two to 10 participants are sufficient to reach saturation of the data and Creswell (1998) recommends “long interviews with up to 10



people” (p. 65) for a phenomenological study. Starks and Trinidad (2007) stated participants who can “provide a detailed account of their experiences” (p. 1375) were sufficient to uncover the “core elements” (p. 1375) to distill the essence of the phenomenon. Participants were selected from institutions that were active members of the ACUI, Region 15 (i.e., California, Nevada, Hawai‘i, and Guam). Potential participants were identified through ACUI’s membership directory. The researcher has been actively involved in ACUI for 15 years and has a number of contacts who have been mentored and served as mentors in the field of higher education administration. These contacts were used to identify potential study participants. The potential sample was narrowed based on years in the field, current position as student union or activities director, and geographic region. No two subjects were selected from the same institution. Criterion sampling, which narrows the potential participant list based on specific criteria (Creswell 2003), was used to select study participants.

The inclusion criteria included:

- Current employment at an ACUI member institution in Region 15, specifically in Southern California.
- Currently serving at the director, assistant director or higher in the field of student unions-activities.
- Only professionals with 5 or more years of experience were included in the study to ensure longevity within the student union-activities profession.
- Staff members must have had supervisory responsibility for student employees within their job description for at least 2 years.

Efforts were made to select subjects from both private and public 4-year institutions within ACUI's Region 15, specifically within the southern California area. Potential participants were sent a letter introducing and explaining the study, including purpose, structure, and required time commitment. Interested participants were asked to respond to the researcher by a specified date. The sample was narrowed again based on availability for interviews and driving distance from the researcher. Selected participants, who met the defined criteria, were contacted directly to schedule an interview. Potential participants who did not meet the above listed criteria or who were unable to participate in face-to-face or phone interviews were excluded from this study. Interested participants not selected for the study received a follow-up thank you letter.

### **Human Subjects**

Written approval was sought from the participants' overarching professional organization, the ACUI in Bloomington, Indiana, prior to selecting and interviewing members of the organization (Appendix A). ACUI serves as the primary professional association of student union-activities directors around the world. To ensure the ethical protection of this study's human participants, approval was also sought from Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board. Exempted review was sought based on the connection of the study to individual and social behavior.

Participants received and were asked to sign and return an informed consent form prior to participation in the study. The form included information regarding the potential benefits and risks to participation in the study, which were minimal. Risks of participation were considered minimal, but potentially included discomfort with some questions. Participants were notified that involvement in the study was entirely voluntary,

that they are able to withdraw from the research at any time, and that their responses were treated with confidentiality. Interviews were audio taped for transcription to ensure accuracy of the data-collection process. No personally identifying information was disclosed. Confidentiality was maintained by means of keeping all collected data in a secured location in the researcher's office. No financial compensation was provided to participants.

### **Procedures**

Data were collected during February and March 2011 by means of a written questionnaire (Appendix B) and individual 60-minute oral interviews that identified staff members' perceptions and experiences that impacted their identification and selection of the student union-activities profession as a career and the role that mentoring played in that decision. All interviews included a face-to-face or phone interview. The interviews involved semistructured, open-ended questions that allowed participants to share their experiences and views related to identifying student unions-activities as a career, and the role mentoring played in their decision to enter the field and its role in their long-term success. Interviews began with the collection of demographic information, including undergraduate experiences, years in the field, size of home institution, and positions held in the student affairs field. Interviews were audio taped for transcription and analysis. All tapes and transcripts were stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. The resulting interview data were analyzed using a coding process to identify common themes, as described under the Analytic Technique section of this chapter.

## **Instrumentation**

The interview questions were developed by the researcher and were based on current research in career development, mentoring, and the student union-activities field. Questions were developed in accordance with phenomenological methods and in support of the study's research objectives.

**Empirical basis for the interview protocol.** This section demonstrates the connection between the interview questions and the connected literature.

1. Please describe how you became aware of the student union-activities profession as a viable career option?

This question is based on Richmond and Sherman's (1991) idea that "student affairs has been called a 'hidden profession'" (p. 8) because no undergrad major leads directly to graduate studies in student affairs and because so few individuals are aware of the field as a career possibility (R. D. Brown, 1987; Komives & Kuh, 1988; Taub & McEwen, 2006; Young, 1985). The intent of this question was to identify how each participant became aware of his or her chosen career.

2. What, if any, factors contributed to your decision to pursue a union-activities career?

Hunter (1992) found four factors that influenced decisions to enter the field: (a) encouragement by those in the field, (b) critical incidents (including student employment as an undergraduate, (c) shared values, and (d) desire to improve campus life. This question was designed to identify common experiences that influenced the participants' decision to enter the student union-activities field. Participation in campus life as an undergraduate and graduate student encourages the development of self-understanding

that opens doors to an understanding of student affairs careers. Lindholm (2004) stated, “Astin posits that individuals pursue vocations that satisfy their basic needs and that ‘make sense’ given their early experiences, opportunities, and perceptions” (p. 608). Two distinct components that shape vocational behavior of prospective academics include career-specific sources of influence and early developmental experience (Finkelstein, 1984).

3. Who or what were your primary sources of information about careers in student unions-activities?

This question was designed to determine if the participants identify a specific mentor as a primary source of information and guidance in the career selection process. The influence of student affairs professionals is one of the important factors in a student’s decision to enter the student affairs profession (Williams et al., 1990). Richmond and Sherman (1991) found that undergraduate employment in student affairs and the encouragement of student affairs professionals were critical in the decision of participants to pursue a student affairs career.

4. How would you describe the role that your mentor played in your career development?

Crisp and Cruz (2009) found more than 50 definitions of mentoring. Levinson, Carrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978) found mentoring to include teacher, sponsor, guide, role model, counselor, and supporter. The most important benefits identified by Levinson et al. dealt with support and encouragement and blessing of the student’s journey to “realization of the dream” (p. 98). A good mentor discerns a

protégé's personal and vocational dream, endorses this as realistic, and offers an environment conducive to facilitating this dream (Johnson, 2002).

5. In what ways did your mentor provide guidance?

This question was designed to elicit information about the type of mentoring participants received from their mentor. Ragins and Cotton (1999) stated, "Mentors are individuals with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing upward support and mobility to their protégés careers" ( p. 529). Mentors help by providing two general functions: career development functions, which facilitate career advancement; and psychosocial functions, which contribute to personal growth and professional development (Kram, 1985b). This question allowed participants to detail the depth of influence that their mentor had on their career and psychosocial development. Johnson (2002) stated, "Mentorships are reciprocal and mutual by design, and the ultimate goal of the relationship is development of a strong professional identity and clear professional competence on the part of the protégé" (p. 88).

6. How, if at all, did your mentor help you to connect to others in the field or to a professional organization?

This question was designed to understand if and how mentors help connect protégés to professional networks, and if a relationship exists between participation in professional networks and long-term career success. Professional networks have been found to play an important role in career development (Kemper, 1968). Mentors serve as a launching pad into professional organizations and career networking opportunities (Kram, 1980; Wright & Wright, 1987). The question also served to reveal which

professional organizations in the field of student affairs are identified as having an impact on the participant's career development.

7. Over the long-term, how would you describe the impact of your mentoring relationship?

The goal of this question was to determine what long-term benefits, if any, exist from the mentoring relationship. Ragins et al. (2000) stated, "Compared to non-mentored individuals, individuals with informal mentors report greater career satisfaction (Fagenson, 1989), career commitment (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990), career mobility (Scandura, 1992) and positive job attitudes (Scandura, 1997)" (p. 1177). Mentoring tends to exist long after the initial mentoring period. Mentors continue to provide support, encouragement, and career guidance (Johnson, 2002).

8. Is there anything I haven't asked you that you would like to comment on regarding your career identification, selection, and mentoring relationships?

This question allowed participants to share any additional information that they believed to be significantly relevant to the research topic (Moustakas, 1994).

9. Do you wish to receive a summary of the dissertation findings at the end of the research?

This question was intended to provide participants a benefit from participating in the research.

**Pilot testing.** The interview questions were pilot tested in November 2010 by two long-term student union-activities professionals prior to the study. These professionals reviewed the reliability and validity of the questions by clarifying meaning and ensuring the connection among questions, current research, and desired outcomes. Pilot study

participants included Mandy Womack, director of Student Organizations and Greek Life at the University of San Diego and Jennifer Puccinelli, resource coordinator at the University of Southern California. Please see Appendices C and D for background descriptions of each of the panelists. The pilot test group members were asked to participate in think-aloud interviews, which allowed them to provide an ongoing commentary on their understanding of the questions and associated meanings. Field test interviews included asking the participants to paraphrase each question to determine if the participants understood the intended meaning of the question clearly. Test participants were also encouraged to provide a running commentary on each question in order to gain further understanding of how it might be interpreted to ensure accuracy and clarity of individual questions. This allowed the researcher to clarify questions and improve the validity of the instrument prior to implementation with the study participants (Desimone and Le Floch, 2004). If pilot test participants disagreed on the intended meaning of the questions, the researcher coordinated a discussion (via telephone) between participants to share their perspectives and develop a new question that more accurately communicated the intended meaning. If a disagreement remained, a third expert in the field was sought to clarify the issue.

### **Analytic Technique**

**Preparation and organization of data.** A phenomenological study requires a process of data reduction based on preparation, organization, and data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). The data collected and recorded during the interviews via audiotape were transcribed verbatim by an independent third party into an electronic database format for further analysis. Starks and Trinidad (2007) stated that in phenomenological



research, it is assumed by both the participant and the researcher that “their words were understood as spoken and intended (i.e., their words speak for themselves)” (p. 1375). Audiotapes of the interviews were stored in a secure location, which allowed for further review of the data if needed. The researcher participated in at least three full readings of the transcribed data before proceeding with the analysis.

**Bracketing.** The researcher was aware and cautious of the participants’ previous experiences and biases related to the study topic. Morse and Richards (2002) recommend the use of bracketing, in which the researcher makes written notes of the participants’ personal theories, experiences, and previous knowledge in order to view data from a fresh, unbiased perspective. Wertz (2005) wrote:

Phenomenological research requires an attitude of wonder that is highly empathetic...it is free of value judgments from an external frame of reference and instead focuses on the meaning of the situation purely as it is given in the participant’s experience. (p. 172)

Bracketing (Appendix E) allowed the researcher to acknowledge presuppositions and instead reflect on the “things themselves” (p. 173). This self-reflective process asked the researcher, as Starks and Trinidad (2007) noted, to “recognize and set aside (but do not abandon) their priori knowledge and assumptions” (p. 1376). As part of this self-reflection, the researcher kept a journal to document assumptions and identify emerging themes and interactions.

Gearing (2004) describes bracketing as having three primary foci: (a) setting aside and suspending presuppositions, (b) focusing on the essences and structures of the data, and (c) a blending of presuppositions and essences in order to understand clearly the

depth of the data. Since ideal bracketing, which blocks out all preconceived notions, may be unrealistic based on the researcher's experience in the field of student unions-activities, a system of descriptive and existential (Moustakas, 1994) bracketing was used to provide, as Gearing (2004) stated, "flexibility and interpretation by the researcher" (p. 1439). Existential bracketing allowed the researcher a wider latitude in analyzing the data in a larger world environment.

Gearing (2004) argues that full analysis of the data requires the reintegration of the researcher's assumptions to achieve future learning. Specific student learning outcomes may be designed by the researcher for use in the student union-activities field to encourage mentoring that would influence students to consider union work as a career.

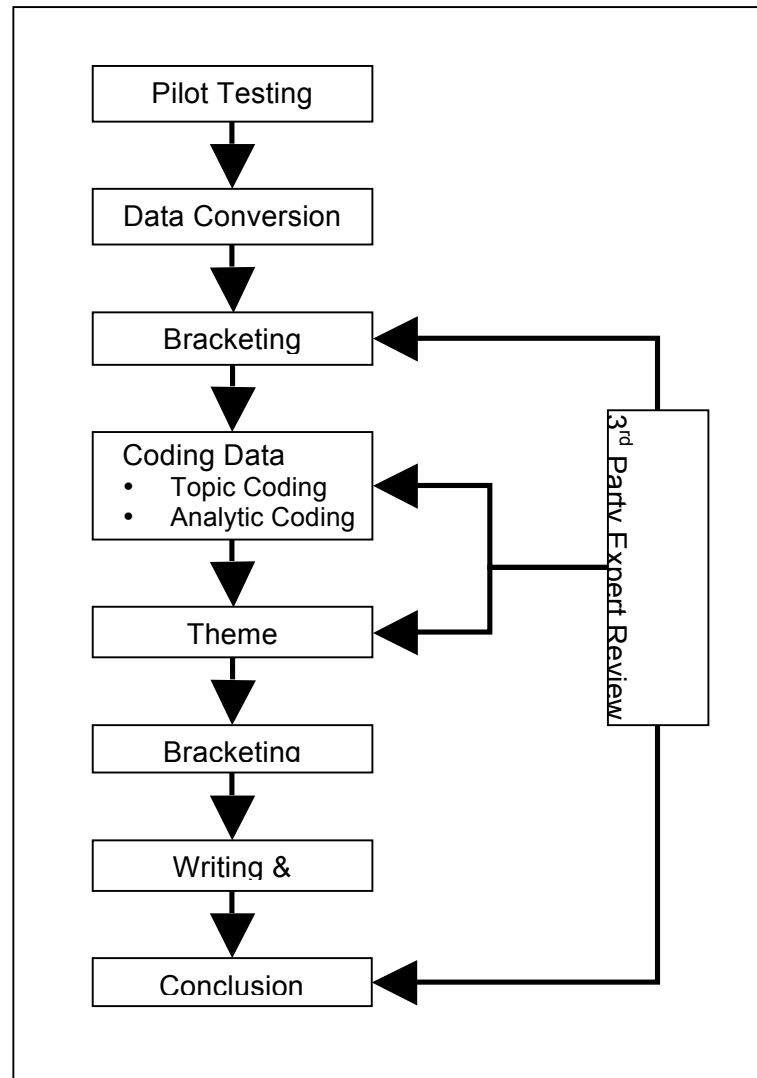
**Peer review.** Two third-party experts in the field of student unions-activities and student development theory participated in an ongoing audit of the data collection process and analytical techniques to ensure the accuracy of the process and the findings. This audit included, but was not limited to, discussions with the researcher about the data collection process, common themes identified, and the meanings attached to themes by the researcher. These third-party experts each have 15 or more years in the field of student unions-activities and held director or assistant vice president positions at ACUI member institutions. The expert panel included Dr. Cynthia Avery, assistant vice president for student life at the University of San Diego and Dr. Susan Payment, director of student life at the College of Charleston. See Appendices F and G for their background qualifications. Recommendations of the experts were incorporated if a direct connection could be established to current literature and agreement was reached between both experts. If agreement could not be reached, an additional expert in the field was brought

into the discussion. Agreement by at least two of the experts was achieved prior to being incorporated into the study.

**Analysis of data.** Phenomenological research is based in the interpretation and understanding of the researcher (Heidegger, 1962). The analysis (Figure 1) was a marriage of raw data review, coding, reflection, writing, and rewriting to ensure an accurate portrayal of the participant's lived experiences. Through the process of thematic and analytic coding, the researcher developed a close understanding of the data and the experiences of study participants. Arminio and Hultgren (2002) wrote:

Phenomenology seeks to understand lived experience phenomena through language that is pretheoretical, without classification or abstraction. It requires that the researcher bring forth previous understandings connected to the phenomenon being studied. This is necessary for researchers to be open to the lived experiences of others. Phenomenology offers intuitive interpretations of text through the process of writing and rewriting. (p. 452)

The true meaning within the data was brought out through a process of writing and rewriting by the researcher (Starks & Trinidad, 2007; van Manen, 1990).



*Figure 1.* Data analysis process. Describes the data collection and analysis process, highlighting the ongoing review by 3<sup>rd</sup> party experts.

**Coding and themes.** A coding system, in which data is decontextualized, was used to sort and analyze the data before recontextualizing it back into consistent themes. The coded data were compared to identify perceived consistencies and differences between specific work experiences and mentors' roles. Topic coding was initially used to break up the data into specific categories, followed by analytic coding, which focused on the development of concepts (themes) based on the data (Morse & Richards, 2002).

Starks and Trinidad (2007) stated this process allowed for the discernment of the “essence or core commonality and structure of the experiences” (p. 1373).

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) stated that themes are identified as “abstract constructs that investigators identify before, during and after data collection” (p. 275). Themes allowed the researcher to focus on the meaning of the data. van Manen (1990) stated, “Theme is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand. Theme describes an aspect of the structure of lived experience” (p. 87). Potential themes included undergraduate experience, the direct impact of a mentor in the undergraduate’s career selection, and the methods mentors use to encourage students to consider careers in the student union-activities field. Special attention was paid to what was experienced, as well as how it was experienced.

**Trustworthiness.** Creswell (1998) asked: “How do we know that the qualitative study is believable, accurate and right?” (p. 193). Varying from quantitative research primarily in language (Table 1), Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four concepts to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Creswell (1998) recommended the use of at least two methods to ensure the trustworthiness and accuracy of the research.

The trustworthiness and accuracy of this study was based in the use of bracketing, peer review, and an accurate portrayal of participants’ lived experiences. Peer review provided credibility by assessing whether the study made sense and provided an accurate portrayal of the phenomenon being studied.

Table 1

*Linguistic Differences in Qualitative Versus Quantitative Research*

Quantitative Terminology	Qualitative Terminology
Internal validity	Credibility
External validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

Bracketing allowed for freedom from researcher bias, resulting in a neutrality and confirmability of study findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the transferability of the research is based on the level of information provided to the reader that allows him or her to make his or her own judgments about the application of the data. Transferability of the study was achieved through the accuracy and rich descriptions of the lived experiences of participants. Starks and Trinidad (2007) stated, ultimately, “readers will judge the trustworthiness of the process by how the analyst uses evidence from the interviews to support the main points and whether the building tasks of language converge toward a convincing explanation” (p. 1376).

As discussed throughout this chapter, the goal of this study was to understand and analyze the lived experiences of participants as they identified and selected careers in the student union-activities field. A phenomenological approach was chosen to discern most accurately the experiences and perspectives of the participants. This adds to the body of knowledge regarding the impact of mentoring on the identification and selection of careers in the college student unions-activities profession.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

This chapter presents the findings of this study based on the data collected during the interview process and the analysis of common themes and experiences of the participants. The analysis focused on how individuals identified and selected careers in the student union-activities field and the role that a mentor played in their career development. Direct quotations and demographic information from participants have been included to ensure that the uniqueness of each of the participants' experience is evident and that their individual voices are heard.

### **Demographic Information**

The researcher initially contacted 12 union-student activities directors at ACUI member institutions in Southern California. Seven participants responded immediately and agreed to participate. An additional participant agreed to participate after a follow-up phone call. Two in-person and six phone interviews were conducted in February and March 2011. The semistructured interviews were recorded by the researcher and transcribed by an independent third-party professional transcriptionist. The researcher reviewed the recordings to ensure accuracy of the transcribed data. The researcher thoroughly read and reread the data prior to thematic coding and analysis, noting patterns, questions, and emerging themes. Careful attention was paid to what participants said and did not say about their experiences. The researcher identified statements and phrases that directly connected to the phenomenon being studied.

Demographic profiles (Appendix D) were collected to develop a better understanding of the experiences that influenced each participant and their perspectives on mentoring and career selection (see Table 2). Each of the participants in this study

currently serves at the student union-activities director level or higher and the participants represent five private and three public institutions in Southern California. Six men and two women participated in this study. They have served in the student union-activities field for an average of 25.9 years.

Table 2

*Participant Demographic Information*

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Male
Age	49	64	49	54	57	49	42	38
Undergraduate Degree	B.A.	B.A.	B.A.	B.A.	B.M.	Partial Completion of B.A.	B.S.	B.A.
Graduate Degree	M.B.A.	M.B.A.	M.A.	M.A.				M.S.
Doctoral Degree							Ph.D. ABD	Ph.D. ABD
Years in Union/Activities Field	24	42	26	31	29	21	18	16
Institutional Affiliation	Private	Private	Private	Public	Public	Public	Private	Private
Current Institution Size (FTE-Full Time Enrollment)	7,200	1,550	37,000	34,800	16,000	30,000	1,700	7,500
Undergraduate /Graduate On-Campus Involvement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

*Notes.* B.A. = Bachelor of Arts; B.S. = Bachelor of Science; B.M. = Bachelor of Management; M.B.A = Master of Business Administration; M.S. = Master of Science; M.A. = Master of Arts; Ph.D. = Doctor of Philosophy; ABD = All But Dissertation



Each participant brings a unique combination of education and work experiences to the table. Seven of the eight participants had obtained an undergraduate degree. All of the undergraduate degrees obtained fell into the social science (communication, sociology, history, etc.) or business management fields. Six participants had received a Master's degree in Business Administration or Education, and two had gone on to complete some level of doctoral study in higher education. All but one participant cited some level of campus involvement or employment during his or her undergraduate or graduate experiences.

The data were initially coded by topic, including primary sources of information, knowledge of the profession, and early experiences-influences. The topic data were analyzed for commonalities and disparities among participants. All data were then reread to organize the data into common themes and meanings (see Table 3). The themes were based on a deeper review and understanding of the lived experiences of the participants. Throughout the analysis, the researcher and two third-party experts identified in Chapter 3 participated in an ongoing discussion of the coding and analysis process. The experts provided insights, questioned assumptions, and highlighted gaps in order to strengthen the analysis. The researcher communicated with the experts both in person and via phone-e-mail to discuss findings and analysis. Both experts were aware of the researcher's experiences in unions and served to bracket the personal assumptions and experiences of the researcher.

Table 3

*Topic and Thematic Coding*

Topic	Themes
Career Knowledge	Luck/Timing Involvement Teaching Career Change Communication
Career Selection	Active Learning Environment People-Relationships
Information Sources	People-Relationships Conference Participation Other Sources
Impact of Mentor	Role Model Availability Advocacy Welcoming Environment Relationship Structure
Fostering Relationships-Involvement	Personal Connections Conference Attendance Volunteer Involvement
Mentoring Impact	Emotional Growth Life Skill Development Feedback
Mentoring Benefits	Renew Passion Expanded Understanding Pay It Forward

**Findings: Research Question 1**

This question sought to identify the recollections of the lived experiences of participants as they became aware of and selected the student union-activities profession as a viable career option.

**Career identification.** Of the participants who obtained a 4-year undergraduate degree, all noted some level of on-campus involvement-employment during their undergraduate study, but only one noted at the time that he or she independently viewed it as a career option. Seven participants relied on relationships with supervisors, mentors, colleagues, and friends as a primary source to obtain information about the profession and potential careers. All seven noted that the flow of information was initiated by the mentor or colleague who recognized potential in the individual and a desire to share a passion for his or her own work in student unions-activities. Four participants noted that these conversations began during their undergraduate years and two participants responded that it was not until they were at the end of their college experience and began applying for jobs that their mentor-supervisor discussed with them the connection between their skills and employment opportunities in the union-activities field.

Five participants noted that they had a mentor or supervisor who first opened their eyes to the student union-activities profession via role modeling and-or encouraging and financially supporting them to attend a professional conference. All eight participants noted that they were encouraged to attend professional conferences, including ACUI, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, or the National Association of Campus Activities. Six participants noted that attendance at an ACUI regional or national conference provided a high level of information about the profession. Participant 5 stated

“I went to ACUI’s regional conference and then I was like, oh, there is actually a career where you can do this” (Personal communication, March 7, 2011). Recognizing the level of financial support their institutions provided, four participants noted that they had attended ACUI conferences as undergraduate students. Despite participation in conferences, participants noted that they received more outreach about the profession from individuals, rather than from the associations directly.

Participants also noted the use of print or online resources in obtaining information on careers in student unions-activities. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, HigherEdJobs.com, and the classifieds were mentioned as sources used. An age discrepancy exists in regard to which sources participants used. Those older than the age of 45 cited print media three times as a source they had used. Two participants younger than 45 referred to online job postings and articles. Only one participant noted finding his or her first job using the newspaper classifieds.

Four participants mentioned luck or good timing in their decision to enter the field. Only two participants learned about their first position in student union-activities through a classified advertisement or job posting.

**Career selection.** Two primary influences, personal relationships and active learning environments, clearly emerged from the data as influencing participants’ decision to pursue a union-activities career. Personal relationships were identified in two ways. First, a focus on the role that mentors played in participants connecting their skill set with the skills required in the student union-activities profession. Participant 3 recalled a conversation with a former supervisor about a job posting during which the supervisor helped the participant recognize how well his or her skill set fit with the

position. “This is the best and perfect job for you. And she started describing to me all the things that I did in college and how that prepared me for the job” (Participant 3, Personal communication, March 2, 2011).

The second relationship factor concentrated on participants’ desire to build meaningful relationships with students and staff. Seven of the eight participants cited how they were strongly influenced by the relationships they developed during their undergraduate experiences. These experiences resulted in a desire to create opportunities for future students to develop strong personal bonds as well. Participant 8 shared:

College really changed me. I grew up in a small town and when I went to college a lot of new things happened. There were a lot of doors opening up in college and I think college is where it all clicked for me. I had never done well academically. I had never done well socially and college was a place where all that kind of came together and the idea of helping students go through that and helping them have a similar experience as I had was really appealing to me. (Personal communication, March 16, 2011)

The second major influence on participants’ desire to enter the student union-activities field was the active learning environment. They were drawn to an environment that actively encouraged ongoing learning and challenged them to explore new experiences. Five of the participants had begun careers in other fields, including business, elementary education, and hospitality management before entering the student union-activities field. Their career changes were prompted by a desire to work in a more fluid and challenging environment that required a broader range of skills. The requirement for a broad skill set, including business, counseling, student development theory, marketing,

and psychology was enticing because it freed them from a stagnant cubicle environment. Participant 7 stated, “the overall work environment, just the day-to-day and is ever changing. The students keep you challenged constantly. It keeps you up on current events and trends, especially with the generations” (Personal communication, March 11, 2011). Participant 5 noted that after a conversation with a mentor, he realized that a career in the student union-activities environment would allow him to fulfill his desire to teach and impact student’s development, but outside of the classroom setting.

The data clearly showed that student union-activities professionals served as primary factors in helping students identify and select union and activities careers. Their role modeling, commitment to personal relationships, and creation of active learning environments greatly impacted the development of the students with whom they worked.

### **Findings: Research Question 2**

Question 2 explored the influence of mentors and professional organizations on study participants’ career development process.

**Mentoring impact.** No study participants had participated in formal mentoring programs, instead relying on informal relationships developed through their initial experiences in the student union-activities environment. Participants hesitated to refer to influential people as mentors, rather describing them as role models, advocates, leaders, supervisors, and colleagues. These influential individuals impacted participants through role modeling, availability, advocacy, and openness. First, all eight participants noted that their greatest lessons came from observing the behavior of their mentors. According to Participant 6:

They taught me about leadership. They taught me a strong sense of ethics and I had the opportunity to be exposed to really passionate people who truly believed that the work that they did was essential to student's own development as people and professionals. (Personal communication, March 8, 2011)

Participant 5 recognized the passion within mentors, "There were a number of people I worked with that, through modeling, I just watched them having fun and being supportive, enjoying what they did" (Personal communication, March 10, 2011).

Participants also observed their mentors participating in professional networks and conferences.

Participants also recognized the lessons learned from negative role models.

Participant 2 stated:

He taught me to be a good boss and a bad boss...some of the things I learned from him were negative, but that's just as important. And when I saw him doing things badly, I knew that I could grow and be better. (Personal communication, February 28, 2011)

Participant 5 recalled a conversation with a mentor who tried to dissuade him from entering the profession:

I understand that you're asking questions about student affairs and how you get involved with it. Do you realize we don't get paid any money? And do you realize its long hours? He basically told me that you really shouldn't go into this profession unless you really had a passion for it because you wouldn't be successful unless you were passionate about it and it kind of caused me to examine where my passion was. And so it started out in what could have been a

negative way, but it really helped me to focus on what my passion was and that helped a lot so that turned out to be a very positive conversation. (Personal communication, March 10, 2011)

Second, the advocacy of mentors directly benefited study participants. Mentors advocated for their protégés by using their own professional networks to help the protégés obtain new employment opportunities, gain new skills, and by challenging protégés to gain new experiences and responsibilities both at their own campus and within professional organizations. Five study participants noted that their mentors directly influenced their ability to obtain employment by informing them about a job opening, contacting a colleague in the field, or serving as a professional reference. In five cases, the mentors recognized that the posted job would be a good career move for the protégé, despite the protégé's hesitation and fear of being unprepared.

Third, the availability of mentors was impactful on participants' career development. At the beginning stages of their career identification and selection processes, participants looked to their supervisors for mentoring and career guidance. As their careers progressed, participants began to look outside of their institutions for guidance and mentoring. Participants noted that their most influential, affective, and long-term mentoring came from individuals who were not their direct supervisors. Participant 6 described these relationships:

I just saw a lot of great role models sort of all around me both in my work settings, but then also you sort of had this parallel professional world in the associations that you became a part of. In this case, it was primarily ACUI and so that opens up a whole new world of mentors, who, in some respects, on some



issues, it's easier to sit down and just sort of pick the brain of people that you admire because there's no overlay with your job. You can talk with them more openly about some things because there's little fear of that getting back to your boss or to other people that you work with. I think it's important to have mentors both in your immediate professional environment and then mentors outside of your day-to-day environment, I think are really critical for learning about yourself and learning about what it means to be in the field. (Personal communication, March 8, 2011)

These indirect connections allowed for deeper conversation without fear of specific job repercussions. It was also noted that these relationships provided a broader perspective to protégés and challenged them to explore new areas for growth within their own campus communities.

**Mentoring benefits.** The primary impacts of mentoring relationships shared by participants were life skill development, emotional growth, and personal confidence. Participant 8 shared, "I believe strongly in professional development. I think it connects people to more than just themselves. It's a chance to get ideas; it's a chance to grow personally outside of your box" (Personal communication, March 16, 2011). Although participants noted that mentoring played a role in their ability to obtain initial employment and advance throughout their career, seven participants credited their mentors with helping them develop personally as leaders and ethical decision makers. Life skills development resulted in a more complex understanding of leadership and management styles, people skills, new perspectives, and a greater understanding and

comfort with themselves. The emotional growth of participants was a direct result of the role modeling they observed. Participant 3 recalled one of his mentors:

He was very comfortable with who he was and standing up, that for me was very helpful. I think that he and the profession taught me that I could be who I was. I thank the profession quite a bit for allowing me to understand who I was and who I wanted to be. (Personal communication, March 2, 2011)

Participant 1 described mentors as someone who “makes you feel valuable. They assume the best about you and that helps you be better” (Personal communication, February 14, 2011). According to Participant 4:

The good thing about mentors for me is the honesty. They were gentler in their approach, but challenged me to look at things about myself. Mentors challenge and provide you with a deep level of feedback, but in a compassionate way. (Personal communication, March 7, 2011)

Mentors were also described as critical, but loving, and able to provide a level of compassionate feedback not often encountered in supervisor relationships. At times, that support was indirect and the mentors relied on their instincts about the protégé’s needs. Participant 5 reminisced:

I really didn’t have a lot of sit-down talks about student affairs and direct support in terms of conversation and information, where am I going, how do I advance. They basically just put me in a position where I could figure that out or find that on my own, but that takes a certain amount of support in itself. (Personal communication, March 10, 2011)

Participants clearly noted that their mentors influenced them both personally and professionally throughout their career journey. This influence was not always recognized in the moment, but fully appreciated upon later reflection. “I look back on every single professional step of my career, there have been mentors there that have shaped and helped to make me a better person” (Participant 8, Personal communication, March 16, 2011).

**Mentor-professional network connections.** Mentors played a vital role in helping study participants connect to a professional organization. The data revealed that encouragement of participation, attendance, and personal introductions were the cited as the way participants initially connected with a professional organization, primarily ACUI. These initial interactions developed into lifetime connections and relationships.

Participants noted they were very aware and grateful for the financial support and encouragement that their institutions provided for them to attend their first professional conferences, especially with limited campus budgets. Participant 8 reflected, “I can’t tell you the number of things I’ve gone to over the years that now I look back and think how the heck did they fund that” (Personal communication, March 16, 2011).

Beyond conference attendance, participants were encouraged by their mentors to volunteer at all levels of the professional organization. Volunteering included presenting educational sessions at conferences, taking on leadership positions at the regional and international levels, and involvement in communities of practice-networks. “My mentors talked with me about getting on a committee or network and being part of a group, then you have access to information, people, and resources” (Participant 4, Personal communication, March 7, 2011). Participant 2 remembered being asked to serve on an

educational session panel discussion after only 6 months in his first professional position. “I was 21 when I graduated and 2 months later, I’m in a professional position and 6 months after that I’m at the international conference presenting, bam. And that put me on the path to involvement regionally and internationally” (Personal communication, February 28, 2011).

Even more influential than conference attendance and involvement alone were the personal introductions and welcoming environment found at ACUI. Participant 5 recalled:

There were mentors from my school who made sure I was introduced and made sure that I made some connections. And then in professional associations in student affairs, people would walk up and introduce themselves and there’s a very open connection in our professional associations that you may not find in others. So they took it upon themselves to be open and introduce themselves and make themselves available to work with me and to interact with me so that was a big part of it. (Personal communication, March 10, 2011)

Within professional associations, open and welcoming environments were also cited as crucial in the development of mentoring connections. Participants shared that these personal connections resulted in shared stories and experiences, discussion about common issues, additional introductions, and the development of a stronger passion for work in the student union-activities field. Participant 2 summed up his experience:

It’s given me a lot of opportunities to do things at different levels. It’s connected me with a lot of people who do the same thing that I do. When you get your first job, you can’t explain what you do to anybody who doesn’t work in higher

education, including your family. And you think you're the only one who's doing it. And so, ACUI connects you with that. But it also gives you the bigger picture that you don't get on your home campus or your day-to-day work. It's people constantly telling you how important the work you do is. (Personal communication, February 28, 2011)

The realization that there is always someone within the organization who is willing to share their experiences, advice, and suggestions provided participants with a level of confidence in their abilities to succeed in a new profession. Participant 7 shared:

The relationships and the bonds that you build and the trust that you build with colleagues that you know that you can rely on both personally and professionally throughout your career is probably what's more intriguing and influential for me.

(Personal communication, March 11, 2011)

Participants noted that individuals within the organization were very welcoming, but there was no mention of what role the structure of the professional organization played in developing those relationships. Participant 8 also noted that being encouraged by mentors to pursue a graduate degree in higher education impacted his or her career path and connections with others in their professional organization.

**From protégé to mentor.** Without hesitation, all eight participants reported mentoring students and new professionals in the student union-activities profession. Mentoring allowed them to give back to the profession, connect with younger generations, celebrate the successes of their protégés, and renew their passion for work in student unions-activities.

The concept of paying it forward was mentioned by four participants in regard to sharing the lessons they had learned throughout their careers in order to help the next generation succeed. Participant 4 noted, “You have a right and obligation to contribute back to the world in some form or fashion and I think that’s what mentoring allows me to do” (Personal communication, March 7, 2011). Participant 6 echoed those thoughts:

You owe it to your profession and if you feel like your profession has given you something important and significant in your life and helps shape who you are, then I think there is something that’s critical for you to give back and do the same thing for others. (Personal communication, March 8, 2011)

Mentoring up-and-coming professionals also allows mentors to stay connected with the next generation. It was noted that this connection provides mentors with a greater understanding of the technological skills of students and new professionals and their need-desire for immediate feedback. Participant 5 reflected:

If I stop to listen carefully, I gain some insight on what student perspectives are on any given topic. More globally, I learn a little bit more about how a particular student thinks and, therefore, maybe how more of their generation thinks. (Personal communication, March 10, 2011)

Participants also commented that mentoring allows them to celebrate the successes of their protégés. “The whole process of just watching someone grow and develop is one of the things I really love about working in higher education” (Participant 3, Personal communication, March 2, 2011). Participant Four echoed:

I love the fact that this profession allows people to grow. In other professions, sometimes it’s more cut and dry. You know they give you 6 months and if you

don't succeed, you're out. I feel like in this profession, we try to work with people so that they grow and they learn from what they did and to me, there's always a spiritual aspect to mentoring. (Personal communication, March 7, 2011)

Described similar to a parent-child relationship, mentoring relationships provide a tangible sign of the mentors' successes. "Seeing the freshmen coming in being nerdy and not knowing what they want to do. You get to grow and nurture them and it just makes you so proud. So personally, it's very enriching and rewarding" (Participant 3, Personal communication, March 3, 2011). Participants noted that these relationships renew their passion and commitment to work in the student union-activities environment. Protégés provide them with a level of energy and freshness that motivates and recommits them to higher education.

**Mentoring as a gift.** Additionally, participants commented on the nature of mentoring within the student union-activities field and their career journeys. Participant 4 described good mentoring as a gift that mentors share with protégés. "Mentors give the gift of growth. And if you can get that, I mean how much better could it get than that?" (Personal communication, March 7, 2011). Such growth is dependent upon critical thinking and truthful conversation. Based on their experiences, good mentoring requires a deep, personal connection. It is a multidirectional relationship that occurs naturally and cannot be forced. Participant 5 highlighted the multidirectional nature of the mentoring relationship through a quote by George Bernard Shaw, "I am not a teacher, only a fellow traveler of whom you asked the way. I pointed ahead, ahead of myself as well as of you" (Personal communication, March 10, 2011). It was also noted that mentoring

relationships come and go over time. Throughout your career, multiple mentors may influence your path and provide you with insights into future opportunities.

Ultimately, the path into the student union-activities environment is different for each individual. Participant 2 shared the following about his colleagues:

We each came to this place differently. There may be some common threads, but there is a difference. Nobody goes to college to go into this business. They all came with different skill sets, different backgrounds and, you know, that's part of the beauty of it. (Personal communication, February 28, 2011)

Participant 6 agreed by saying:

Many of us in the field can say it wasn't something I planned on. And I think it states the fact that I ended up on a path that I did speaks to how important those relationships and people were to me both in the very beginning and then along the last 20 years. Ultimately for me, I think it's because of the people that I have been fortunate enough to work with, to know and become friends with is what ultimately what shaped my choice. If I hadn't found some kind of reward out of being with the people that I've spent time with, I don't think that I would have continued on the path. I mean it's more than that because the work itself is rewarding, but it's sort of the introduction of that career was all because of meeting good people and people who shared a lot of the same values as myself. So it was the best accident that ever happened. (Personal communication, March 8, 2011)



## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

This research focused on the role that mentors play in the identification and selection of careers in the student union-activities profession. More specifically, this project examined the mentoring structure and the development of mentoring relationships within the student union-activities field, including the role played by professional organizations. Written demographic surveys and semistructured interviews allowed the researcher to explore and understand the lived experiences of participants. Thematic coding was used to analyze the data and develop a common and integrated understanding of the mentoring and career selection phenomenon. This chapter presents a discussion of findings, reflections, research limitations, and suggestions for future research on the connection between mentoring and career identification and selection in the student union-activities profession.

The data demonstrated that mentoring occurs naturally within the student union-activities profession. The mentoring relationships that developed were organic and constantly evolving, depending on the career stage of the participants. Participants noted having multiple mentors or sources of influence throughout their careers. Supporting the findings of Williams et al. (1990), study participants also recalled encountering influential people who helped them maintain and develop as professionals in the field. Their mentoring relationships focused primarily on life-skill development (communication, interpersonal skills, conflict management, leadership, etc.) and personal growth (developing a deeper understanding of self). Career development and success was a byproduct of their overall personal development. The career benefits cited by participants closely matched those of Kram (1985a), including career promotions,

exposure to expanded opportunities, feedback, and idea sharing. Career influence developed from protégés observing their mentors' passion and dedication to the student union-activities profession, rather than direct conversation.

The idea of mentoring was ingrained in the mind-set of the participants. Without the realization of the participants, the transition from protégé to mentor developed out of a personal desire to influence the next generation of student union-activities professionals, similar to the findings of Forney (1994). The new role of mentor continued to provide benefits to the participants, including connecting to the next generation of students, expanded comfort with technology, and a sense of pride in their protégé's successes. Participants desire to pay it forward stemmed from a personal desire to build relationships, rather than from a strategic desire to develop the profession. Despite their passion for the profession and mentoring, no participants had participated in formal mentoring programs and no formal programs were cited within their professional organizations.

Similar to research connecting mentoring and career selection in other fields, mentoring within student unions-activities directly impacts the next generation of student union-activities professionals. The profession may benefit from recognizing and celebrating the influence of mentors in attracting and developing the next generation of student union-activities professionals and the role mentors play in revealing the "hidden profession" (Richmond & Sherman, 1991, p. 8). A proactive approach by ACUI and other professional student affairs organizations to identify potential new professionals would benefit the profession long term. Programs including career fair participation and partnerships with academic departments (education, business, etc.) could serve as a

stepping-stone to marketing the profession and attracting the next generation of professionals.

### **Future Research**

Future research is needed to explore further the role of mentoring in the student union-activities profession. All participants in the study were serving at the student union director level or higher at 4-year institutions. An expanded study that included both new and seasoned professionals at 4-year and 2-year institutions might allow for insight into the role mentoring plays at different levels of career development. Expanding this study to include young student union-activities professionals could allow for a more balanced result and understanding of the multidirectional nature of mentoring relationships.

This study focused only on the experiences of student union-activities professionals within Southern California. An expanded nationwide study could allow for a deeper understanding of the professional journey of student union-activities professionals.

Similar to the research of Hodge (2004), this research demonstrated that mentoring in the student affairs arena seems to develop at an informal, organic level. Additional research into differences and success rates of formal versus informal mentoring in the student union-activities field would be beneficial. It would be interesting to explore whether a formal mentoring program would have greater or less significant impact.

A longitudinal study of members of the ACUI is warranted to determine the role that mentoring plays in the long-term success of the association, the recruitment of new student union-activities professionals, and the longevity of those in the profession.

Professional associations, including ACUI, benefit greatly from the mentoring relationships of their members. This recognition could come in the form of a mentor of the year award or spotlighting mentor and protégé relationships in association publications. Encouragement to get involved and volunteer within the association directly impacts the long-term success of the organization.

Student unions and activities departments around the country are facing significant cutbacks in budgets and staffing resources. Further exploration of the learning outcomes associated with mentoring, conference attendance, and volunteering within professional associations is needed to bolster the important role student union-activities professionals play on their campuses, the role professional organizations play in employee development, and, in turn, how these benefit the campus environment. The research would assist professionals in the struggle to obtain funding on their campuses to participate in professional organizations.

### **Recommendations**

Clearly, there is still work to be done in the development of mentoring relationships in the student union-activities profession. The long-term success of the profession depends upon the recruitment of highly dedicated and passionate new professionals. This study confirmed that mentoring plays a vital role in attracting new professionals into the student union-activities field. Informal conversations among mentors, advisors, or supervisors are often the spark that encourages a protégé to pursue a career in the student union-activities profession. Often without the initial realization of participants, mentoring relationships develop naturally and informally within the union-activities profession. Professional organizations such as ACUI would benefit from

exploring new ways to encourage mentoring relationships between seasoned and new professionals and from recognizing and celebrating the mentoring that occurs within the profession.

Mentoring relationships are dynamic and always evolving. They provide support, challenge, and recognition for the valuable work being done by student union-activities professionals on a daily basis. Both the mentor and protégé benefit from the relationship and the profession would gain from celebrating and recognizing these influential relationships. Ultimately, mentors serve to bring out the best in their protégés.

“A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could.” —Unknown.

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## APPENDIX A

## Letter of Support From the Association of College Unions International



Association of College Unions International

Association of College Unions International

*Serving the college union and  
student activities profession since 1914*

One City Centre, Suite 200

120 W. Seventh St.

Bloomington, IN 47404-3925 USA

(812) 855-8550

Fax (812) 855-0162

[www.acui.org](http://www.acui.org)

Jean Kang  
Manager, GPS IRB and Dissertation support  
Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education & Psychology  
6100 Center Drive 5th Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90045

Dear Jean,

The Association of College Unions International (ACUI) has supported and enhanced the student union/activities field since 1914 and is a leader in advancing campus community builders at campuses around the globe. ACUI is aware of and in support of the research regarding the identification and selection of the student union/activities profession being conducted by Kathy K. McIntosh. We gladly grant our approval for the Ms. McIntosh to collect data from professionals within ACUI and our member institutions (as listed in the 2010 membership directory). We are aware that participation in this study is voluntary and has minimal risks associated with it. It is our hope this research will add to the growing body of research in the field of student union/activities and benefit our members in the future.

Sincerely,

Marsha Herman-Betzen  
Executive Director  
Association of College Unions International

## APPENDIX B

## Participant Demographic Information

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Year of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years in the student union/activities profession: \_\_\_\_\_

Size of current institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Educational Background (please list school(s) attended and degree(s) received, starting with the most recent):

Employment History (please list all prior work experience and institutions, starting with your current position):

Undergraduate/Graduate On-Campus Experiences (please list all activities (including work experiences) participated in during your undergraduate and graduate education):

Did you have a mentor in the student union/activities field during your undergraduate or graduate experiences? Please explain.

Do you currently mentor a young professional in the student union/activities profession? Please explain.



## APPENDIX C

### Vita

Mandy Womack

### EDUCATION

- 1995 Master of Education, Counseling—University of San Diego
- 1994 Bachelor of Arts, Liberal Studies—San Diego State University

### CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

Womack, M. (2009). *Balancing multiple responsibilities—How Can I Do It All Well?*

Presented at the Association of Fraternity Advisors Annual Meeting.

Womack, M. (2010). *Peer Conduct Boards—Developing An Accountability System That*

*Works*. Presented at the Association of Fraternal Leadership and Values—West Annual Meeting.

Womack, M. (2010). *More Than “Mandatory”*. Presented at the Association of Fraternal Leadership and Values—West Annual Meeting.

### PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

University of San Diego

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 2002–2010 | Director of Student Organizations & Greek Life                                 |
| 2003–2004 | Manchester Village Resident Fellow, Department of Housing and Residence Life   |
| 2003      | Manchester Village Standards Advisor, Department of Housing and Residence Life |
| 2002–2003 | Acting Assistant Dean of Students, Student Life                                |
| 2000–2002 | Assistant Director of Student Activities, Student Life                         |
| 1997–2000 | Student Activities Program Advisor, Student Life                               |

## APPENDIX D

### Vita

Jennifer Puccinelli

### EDUCATION

1998 Bachelor of Science, Business Administration, Accounting Option–California State University, Los Angeles

### CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Puccinelli, J. (2004) *College Bowl: Running a Successful Tournament*. Presented at the Association of College Unions International Region 15 Conference, Monterey Bay, CA.

Puccinelli, J. (2004). *Successful Transitioning of Student Leaders*. Presented at the Association of College Unions International Annual Conference, Washington DC.

### PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

University of Southern California

2010–Present Administrative Manager, Student Life & Involvement

2006–2010 Resource Coordinator, Student Life & Involvement

California State University, Los Angeles

1999–2005 Assistant to the Directors, University–Student Union

1996–1999 Accounting Analyst, University–Student Union

## APPENDIX E

### Bracketing

I first became aware of the student union/activities profession as an undergraduate student at Santa Clara University. My first on-campus job was at the campus information desk in the student union. This position developed into serving as a student building manager and a role on the student union advisory board. Through these experiences, I was significantly influenced by a mentor who demonstrated a passion for student development and creating an environment for student learning within the union facility. Through his encouragement, I decided to explore the student union/activities field while obtaining a graduate degree. Additional mentors during my graduate studies encouraged involvement in the Association of College Unions International and pushed me to explore and develop my skills within the profession. Not only have these individuals influenced my career and academic paths, they have shown me what it is to be a compassionate leader and human being. I not only consider them mentors, but true friends.

For the past 15 years, I have been committed to the college union ideal through my employment at the University of San Diego and my volunteer involvement in ACUI. I continue to be mentored by colleagues in the student union/activities profession and have had the opportunity to mentor students and young professionals in the field. I have come to understand the multi-directional nature of mentoring relationships as I find much energy and joy in watching my students grow and develop into future leaders.

When I began to explore dissertation topics, I knew that a blending of my passion for the student union/activities environment and the idea of mentors were a great combination. I look forward to exploring this topic further throughout my career.

## APPENDIX F

### Vita

Cynthia M. Avery

### EDUCATION

- 2007 Doctor of Education, Educational Leadership—University of California, San Diego  
& San Diego State University
- 1990 Master of Science in Education, College Student Development—Alfred University
- 1988 Bachelor of Science, Management Science—State University of New York,  
College at Geneseo. Minor: Organizational and Occupational Behavior

### CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

- Avery, C. M., & Daly, A. J. (2010). Promoting Equitable Educational Outcomes for High-Risk College Students: The Roles of Social Capital and Resilience. *Journal of Equity in Education, 1*(1), 20–50.
- Goldstein, D., Day, J., & Avery, C. M. (2004). In a Crisis, Do Students Really Know they Matter? *About Campus, 9*(1), 26–28.
- Avery, C. M. (2001). Developing Recognition Programs for Units within Student Affairs. *The College Student Affairs Journal, 21*(1), 64–72.

### PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

University of San Diego

2009-Present Assistant Vice President, Student Life

San Diego State University

2008–2009 Director of Student Affairs Graduate and Undergraduate  
Curriculum and Leadership Programs

2007–2008	Interim Executive Director, Leadership Initiatives & Campus Life
2007–2007	Interim Director, Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities
2003–2007	Director, Residential Education Office
2001–2003	Director/Dean, Office of Student Life and Development
2000–2001	Associate Director, University Residential Education

University of Georgia

1997–2000	Assistant Director, Department of University Housing
1995–1997	Coordinator for Staff Development and Judicial Programs, Department of University Housing

## APPENDIX G

### Vita

Susan H. Payment

### EDUCATION

- 2003 Doctor of Education Leadership Studies—University of San Diego
- 1993 Master of Education Counseling—University of San Diego
- 1988 Master of Arts Applied History—University of South Carolina
- 1985 Bachelor of Arts History—University of Michigan

### CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Hoffman, J., & Payment, S. (2010, March). *The Competitive Edge: Positioning Yourself for Your First College Unions and Student Activities Job*. Presented at the Association of College Unions International Annual Conference, New York, NY.
- Payment, S. (2009, September). *Risk Management 101*. Presented as part of the Student Organizations Summit Series at the College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.
- Cacha, L., Hoffman, J., & Payment, S. (2008, March). *Do You Know What It Means to Be a Senior-Level Union or Activities Professional?* Presented at the Association of College Unions International Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.
- Payment, S., & Short, E. (2006, November). *The People We Serve: Anticipating the Needs of Millennial Students*. Presented at the Association of College Unions International Region 5 Conference, Chapel Hill, NC

## **PROFESSIONAL HISTORY**

### College of Charleston

2004–Present   Present Director, Office of Student Life

### University of San Diego

2002–2004   Director, Student Activities

1996–2002   Associate Director, Student Activities

1990–1995   Assistant, Student Activities